



# Arming the Knight for Dismounted Combat

by Captain Mike Sullivan

*The squire checks his master's equipment again. Picking up the armored shield, he hands it to his master, followed by the lance with the hardened tip. Ensuring the leg armor for his master is securely fastened, the squire steps back and makes one last visual check of his now-mounted master. An imposing figure for sure, his master is prepped for mounted combat, complete with his shield to protect him from enemy blows and his lance to reach out and destroy any enemy he encounters. However, prior to departing toward the growing sounds of battle, his master hesitates and looks down at the squire through an open visor and speaks, "Prepare my mace and sword for ground combat." The squire stands dumbfounded. Does his master intend to dismount from his steed and engage the enemy on the ground? "Squire, my dismounted equipment!" calls out the knight with growing impatience. "Sire, you are a knight! There is no need to dismount and engage the enemy on the ground!" pleads the squire. "Squire," sighs the armored knight, "these are modern*

*times. Armored knights can no longer stay mounted and engage such a spurious enemy. I need the proper equipment to fight both mounted and dismounted. Now go forth and procure equipment so I can destroy my enemy both from my mount and on the ground!"*

Armored warriors no longer fight from mounted positions inside tanks on an open battlefield. As our mounted forces continue to dismount and fight ground battles, it is time to take a hard look at an armored cavalry unit's modification table of organization and equipment (MTOE) and determine if we, like the squire, are equipping our mounted warriors with the right equipment.

## Weapons

There is no doubt we have the finest tanks and infantry fighting vehicles in the world. Their speed, firepower, and armor protection are among the best. However, akin to the long-standing

Marine motto, “every Marine is a rifleman,” our tankers of today need rifles! More and more units are performing infantry-type missions and need to be equipped as such. From our experiences with a standard armor battalion and watching units rotate through the Combat Maneuver Training Center, one glaring discrepancy arises — once away from their tanks, tankers do not have the proper weapons systems for dismounted combat.

First and foremost, every soldier on the ground needs a rifle. Bottom line is every soldier must have the capability to reach out and touch his enemy with something more than a pistol. The current MTOE for armor companies assigns two rifles per tank. This is completely inadequate when soldiers are dismounted. In fact, two weapons would be an ideal mix for dismounted soldiers. A rifle should be a tanker’s primary weapon and a pistol should be his secondary/backup weapon. Special operations soldiers, special weapons attack team members, and infantrymen understand the concept of weapons redundancy. However, this notion is foreign to tankers. Too many tankers are satisfied with simply carrying a pistol for convenience. As more tankers move away from their tanks, they need proper small arms. Equipping each tanker with a rifle and pistol will greatly enhance the lethality of tankers.

Each tank company is equipped with only two M203 grenade launchers. This is completely inadequate for a 70-man company. The M203 not only provides excellent suppressive capability, but its ability to fire pyrotechnic rounds assists in signaling, shifting fires, and marking sectors of fire (ground burst flares). One per tank crew would provide firepower similar to that found in an infantry fire team.

Each tank obviously is equipped with two M240 machine guns. Removing these weapons systems and using them for dismounted operations is possible but not recommended. First, the M240s need the dismounted conversion kit to make them semi-useful on the ground. Technical Manual (TM) 9-1005-313-10, *Operator’s Manual for Machine Gun, 7.62mm, M240*, shows the components for the M240 conversion kit.<sup>1</sup> This kit has all the necessary materials to convert an M240C to a scaled-down version of the M240B (buttstock, trigger mechanism, and bipod), scaled-

down in that the conversion kit gives you the bare-bones version of what is necessary to successfully ground fire the M240 without some of the more advanced features, such as sights, found on an actual M240B.

The M249 offers a significant increase in firepower without adding the extra weight of the M240B. The squad automatic weapon (SAW) is not even listed on an armor company’s MTOE, but would make a welcome addition to dismounted operations. In case of an emergency, the ability to lay down large amounts of suppressive fire with similar ammunition (5.56mm) requires another look at the SAW as a potential addition to the armor dismounted weapons kit.

Dismounted armor soldiers using small arms need to be well trained on the use of each weapons system. It is a world of difference firing an M240 from a coax or loader’s position than it is from the ground. Training, weapons qualification, and live-fire training prior to deployment with the weapons systems they will use in actual combat is vital. Finally, do not neglect the necessary items that are frequently overlooked: when dismounted, how the M240 gunner will carry his ammunition (the SAW ammunition comes in a carry-ready magazine but the M240 ammunition does not); and if each weapon has a spare barrel and necessary items to conduct a rapid barrel change. These are small but necessary details required when dismounting these weapons systems.

### Weapons Accessories

Everyone has seen the modified weapons used by infantry units in Afghanistan and Iraq. Not found on an armor company MTOE, sighting systems, such as the M68, close combat optic (CCO) and visible light (TACLIGHTS) systems, are vital to conducting combat operations in military operations in urban terrain (MOUT) environments. The CCO, when properly sighted, provides an added measure of accuracy in a reflexive fire environment where a split second is all it takes to decide between life and death. The M68, currently in the Army’s inventory, requires training and proper mounting to be effective, but is another tool we can add to our armored knights as they dismount.

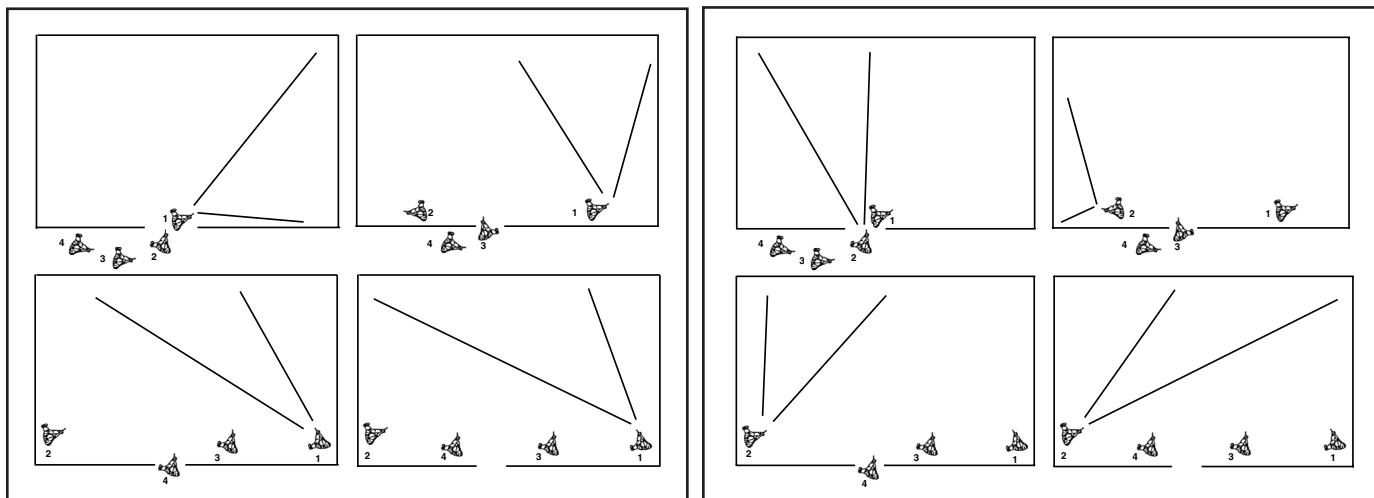
TACLIGHTs, which are flashlights mounted on weapons systems, are another tool we need to add to our soldier’s kit bag.

White light is the preferred method for clearing buildings, even in daylight, due to the dark and constrained environment of MOUT. White light requires little additional training and no need to boresight, unlike infrared aiming lights such as the PAQ-4C and the PEQ-2. White light, much like infrared lights, do require discipline and should only



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**Figure 1.** These diagrams from FM 3-06.11 show first and second man moving through entry point during room-clearing procedures.

be used once inside a building. These simple, yet highly effective tools can increase the efficiency of a soldier's search and improve his personal security.

### **MOUT Operations/ Breach Kits**

We understand that to most tankers, breaching a building simply requires "Gunner, HEAT, Door!" This fire command, however, has limited value in the fluid MOUT environment our troops encounter today. Once dismounted, our armored warriors need to know how to breach doors to enter and clear a room.

Training MOUT is a necessary skill that can be taught with simple engineer tape and a knowledgeable instructor. Knowing what role each man needs in a three- or four-man stack is vital to MOUT survival. But before soldiers can execute the battle drill, they need to get into the building/room.

According to U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 3-06.11, *Combined Arms Operations in Urban Terrain*, there are three major types of breaching methods: ballistic (shotgun), explosive (demolition), and mechanical. All three require specialized training and equipment. Mechanical breaching is the preferred method for a tank unit with little MOUT experience.<sup>2</sup>

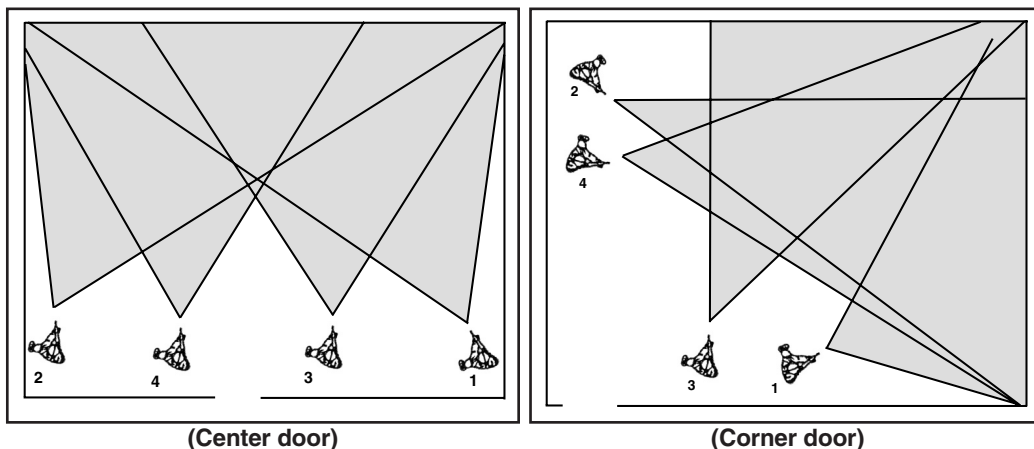
A ballistic breach uses a ballistic entry method, be it a shotgun or an M1A1 main gun. Shotgun breaches require, of all things, a shotgun. Chances are most armor units do not have shotguns. Are they valuable? Absolutely! With the right training on how to conduct door breaches, shotguns can offer entry through just about any doorway.<sup>3</sup>

Explosive breaches require extensive training in the use of demolitions. Using C4, shock tube, det cord, and other devices, explosive breaches almost guarantee a way into a building. However, think about the last time you played with explosives in your unit. Again, this is another expert method of breaching and one that requires extensive training.

It is the mechanical method of breaching that often appeals to the tanker. Basically, use a tool to pry, rip, or disable an entry point, then enter the building. A tanker bar can be used in a pinch but highly specialized tools are available and should be added to the armor soldier's inventory. Halligan tools, sledgehammers, padlock busters, and other wicked tools used for years by rescue services are some mechanical breaching devices, which can make short work of a door. These devices are easily found online and through military supply catalogs. Again, proper training in using these devices is necessary; however, it does not take a lot of time to figure out how a sledgehammer works. By building mechanical breach kits, each squad or platoon will have the capability to rapidly breach any door or window with little specialized training. FM 3-06.11 provides a valuable list of breaching items, marking items, signaling devices and miscellaneous items valuable in building a platoon breach kit. Company commanders should fight hard to train soldiers and obtain equipment necessary for breaching operations.<sup>4</sup>

### **Battle Drill**

Once the armored soldier has created a breach, the next step is to enter and clear the room/hallway. Figure 1 demonstrates prop-



**Figure 2.** The diagram at left, from FM 3-06.11, shows the points of domination and sectors of fire for each team member during room-clearing procedures.

er room-clearing procedures that tankers need to know. Using Battle Drill 6 in FM 3-06.11, page 3-28, soldiers are broken down into three- or four-man teams and learn the role of each spot on that team.<sup>5</sup> Like any battle drill, repetition is key to learning. The battle drill clearly demonstrates the responsibility of each team member as they enter the room. Figure 2, from Battle Drill 6 in FM 3-06.11, depicts sectors of fire during room-clearing procedures.<sup>6</sup>

By practicing these drills daily, every tanker should be as skilled at these techniques as any member of a light infantry battalion. The enemy does not care if you are a tanker or a ranger, and neither should you. Every soldier preparing to deploy into harm's way needs to be proficient in these drills to ensure survival and continued success in MOUT operations.

## ARMOR

Like the knight of old, our modern day mounted warriors have access to some of the best armor available. Kevlar and ceramic plates have replaced iron and steel. Each tanker on the ground needs to be equipped with the best available body armor and protective equipment. Obviously, the interceptor body armor must be made available to every soldier entering theater, complete with front and back ceramic plates. Ballistic eye protection is another overlooked vital piece of equipment every soldier should wear. Elbow and kneepads are simple pieces of equipment highly valuable in a MOUT environment and something many tankers are not used to wearing. Finally, every soldier

should have individual, hands-free hydration systems similar to Camelback and Hydrastorm designs. More than a simple convenience, these systems free up a soldier's hands to concentration on scanning for possible threats while remaining hydrated.

The Cold War days are long gone. Every tanker must now be a well-trained and successful infantryman, as well as a mounted warrior. Having the necessary skills and equipment to win in a dismounted environment are vital for today's armored soldiers. The equipment and training tools are there. Although, we have not discussed other necessary components of MOUT, such as mental and physical conditioning, reflexive firing techniques, and various MOUT movement techniques, all of these vital skills are found in FM 3-06.11.<sup>7</sup> As armor leaders, we must all be familiar with this FM and be prepared to win on another type of battlefield. Like our squire of old, we as leaders, must train and equip our mounted warriors for success.

*After frantically searching, the squire returns with a mace, two-handed broadsword, and an axe. The knight nods approvingly at his squire and selects his weapon. Armed with the proper equipment to do battle on the ground, our knight moves forward to defeat his enemy once again.*



## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Technical Manual 9-1005-313-10, *Operator's Manual for Machine Gun, 7.62mm, M240*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., July 1996.

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Army Field Manual 3-06.11, *Combined Arms Operations in Urban Terrain*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 28 February 2002, p. 3-26.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 3-25.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1-3.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 3-28, Battle Drill 6.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 3-32.

<sup>7</sup>FM 3-06.11.



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